

SPRING 2020

# Beech Leaves



## Moments that Matter

by Felicia Coffman

*This essay was submitted as part of a contest for Beech Brook staff, asking them to share “moments that mattered” during their work here. Felicia Coffman shared this story from her time as a therapist in Beech Brook’s Residential Treatment Program. Today Felicia, who first joined the staff in 2013, serves as a clinical supervisor in the School-Based and REACH programs.*

I wanted to share about a very meaningful interaction that I had with a client. I was in my first year as a counselor in the Outpatient Department on campus, as well as working with the residential kiddos (individual and group therapy).

I had a client, age 17, who was very depressed and had such low motivation for change that she could not even direct our sessions for what interventions would

help her the most. I would always bring several activities to explore feelings and facilitate processing of her strengths, etc. However, after a while, I began to feel that I

was doing most of the work, and I wanted to empower her efforts to work towards change.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Charles B. Zellmer  
**Chair**

Tracy D. Crandall  
**Vice Chair Administration**

Jennifer N. Pinkerton  
**Vice Chair Development**

Victor J. DeMarco  
**Vice Chair Finance/Treasurer**

Kathryn L. Kaesberg  
Brad W. Kostka  
Amanda M. Miller  
Jennifer A. Mills  
Terry W. Owen  
Robert P. Phillips-Plona  
Thomas A. Seifert  
Mark I. Singer  
Gary M. Small  
Shawn T. Wright

### Life Directors

Harry L. Holmes  
Patricia C. Lightbody  
Kathy C. Pender  
G. Walter Stuelpe

### Honorary Directors

Stephen J. Alfred  
Raymond J. Balester  
Malcolm M. Cutting  
C. Henry Foltz  
Nancy Klein  
Anthony R. Michel  
Jane Q. Outcalt  
Gretchen D. Smith

### Leadership Advisory Council

Mark Bober  
William B. Doggett  
Drew C. Forhan  
M. Ann Harlan  
Carol S. Markey  
John G. Nestor  
James R. Pender  
Edward Schwartz  
Jack Staph  
Noreen L. Sussman  
Arthur W. Treuhaft

### President/CEO

Thomas P. Royer

### Executive Advisor

Debra Rex

### President Emeritus

Mario Tonti

# A Message from Tom Royer, President/CEO



Our new reality at Beech Brook and throughout our world is just a few weeks old. It seems a lot longer, but with the Governor's latest stay-at-home order

extended until May 1, we are preparing for this to be longer still.

At Beech Brook, we are missing normalcy like everyone else. Routines are completely broken. Our staff, foster parents and clients are all experiencing anxiety around the crisis itself, the changes this has brought to our work and our personal lives, and, of course, our heightened concern for those we serve.

We are all working from home, and that's very different for many of us. I find myself wandering around the house for no reason at all...almost like I am looking for something I've lost. I am sure many of you have had the same experience.

But new routines are developing for everyone. Routines are easily replaced - especially when falling back into old habits is not an option! And I want you to know that the staff at Beech Brook have really stepped up to the plate to support one another and to do their work differently so we can still be effective in serving our clients and our community.

None of us has ever been through a crisis like this before. There is no playbook, there are no case studies, and no wisdom to be gained from those who have lived through this before.

So, it is up to us to figure it out. It all comes down to our people. I am amazed with how quickly we transformed Beech Brook into a remote workforce! Is it perfect? No. (But I'll tell you a little secret; it was never perfect).

For the staff at Beech Brook, there seems to be no problem too complicated to solve. I am proud of their bravery...not only in the work they all do (that has always taken courage), but in their willingness to work outside of their comfort zone, try new methods, adopt new technology, and maintain patience with others.

I have always appreciated the people who work at Beech Brook. But I appreciate them all even more today.

With the full support of our Board of Directors, we are currently paying all our full-time and part-time staff, even though much of our funding has been derailed. They are our most valuable asset, and we simply cannot continue to be the lifeline our clients need without them. But we are also continuing to pay them because we care deeply about our staff and their families. They are unsung heroes in our community and deserve to be treated as such. They are the finest people I know.

## Here's a quick look at the services we're providing at Beech Brook right now:

- Our parenting and other prevention classes have been canceled for the interim. All the host sites are closed, and, of course, no one should congregate in groups. The leaders of those classes are continuing to reach out to those participants by phone.
- Behavioral health services (including outpatient, school-based, REACH and early childhood) are being provided by phone and teleconference. In extreme emergency cases (determined on a case-by-case basis), staff may need to see a client face-to-face.
- Family Preservation services are being provided remotely as much as is possible.
- Foster Care visits and meetings are scheduled to proceed as required by our contracts. If a young person is scheduled to have a visit with their parent as stipulated in the case plan or by court order, we facilitate the visit as normally as possible, except in cases where the child or family member may be at risk of illness.

We are keeping all other face-to-face visits to a minimum, opting for remote "touches" instead.

The Executive Team conducts a conference call every morning at 10 a.m. to sort through any issues that arise. The ground is always shifting, but our punch list of issues to resolve has gone down dramatically. There is at least one communication from the Executive Office to all staff each day. Emergency issues are taken care of on the spot.

We have, out of necessity, taken this opportunity to implement or enhance new technology. Every day multiple staff members meet online using Microsoft Teams, and we have rolled out the ability for staff to make phone calls from computers so that they do not have to use all of the minutes on their personal phone plans for client contact and therapy. Videoconferencing (approved by the State of Ohio during this crisis) allows staff to interact with their clients face-to-face.

In addition to continuing critical clinical and support services, our staff members have been going above and beyond what they would normally do. For instance, many of our clients rely on food pantries or the school to provide nutrition for their children; however, they also have significant transportation barriers. Many staff members are picking up food and other essentials, such as baby formula, and leaving it on their clients' doorsteps. This is not something that we are required to do, nor do we get reimbursed for doing it. But our families need us, and we will do what we need to do.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel plans for our spring fundraisers, and this has had another significant negative impact on our finances. But there are still ways to help. In this issue, you'll read about the Hearts of Hope

Fund we've established to help our clients and our organization during this crisis. We hope you'll consider making a gift to this fund.

Finally, I would like to update you on the sale of Beech Brook's property. If you read any of the local papers, you have probably seen the many articles and letters to the editor regarding the rezoning issue involved in the sale. Some of these letters contain a great deal of misinformation. In late March, I wrote a letter to the editor of *The Chagrin Valley Times* to try to clear up some of these misunderstandings; however, the letters continue, often full of inaccurate information and untruths.

For that reason, we are including information about the property sale in this edition of the *Beech Leaves*. If you are a subscriber to our e-newsletter, you may already have read this, but we know there are many of you who may not have received that.

As always, we are grateful for your support and trust in the work we do at Beech Brook, and I want you to know we will persevere through this crisis and continue to serve our community's most vulnerable children and families for many years to come.

With our best wishes for the good health and safety of you and your loved ones,



# Setting the Record Straight

## Clearing up misinformation about the Beech Brook land sale

by Tom Royer

*(On March 30, we shared this information in our e-newsletter; however, we know not all our donors are on that list, so we're reprinting that for you now. If you'd like to receive our e-newsletter, please visit our website to sign up or contact [aschneider@beechbrook.org](mailto:aschneider@beechbrook.org).)*

Over the past few months, you may have been hearing or reading a great deal about the rezoning of our land in Pepper Pike.

Until recently, most of those concerns have revolved around the need for more commercial development or the increased traffic that might bring. But lately, a handful of vocal opponents have been spreading negative information about Beech Brook - information that is not only untrue but harmful to our reputation and our ability to move from this campus.

I'm writing today to clear up some of that misinformation, which I also addressed in an Op-Ed in the March 26 edition of the *Chagrin Valley Times*.

### False claim

This is the "former" Beech Brook property and is now vacant.

### Fact

You may have heard or read the erroneous description of our land as the "property formerly known as Beech Brook" or the "former Beech Brook property." There's no former about it! Our Pepper Pike campus continues to serve as the headquarters for our administrative and management staff and a few direct services.

In 2016, we closed **only our residential treatment program**, which served about 45 children and teens, to focus on our community and school-based programs. Today **our 225-member staff serves more than 14,000 children and families** through more than 40 programs, partnerships with 96 schools, including the Orange Schools, a strong foster care network and our Beech Brook Family Center located in the city of Cleveland.

### False Claim

The Beech Brook property belongs to the city of Pepper Pike.

### Fact

Beech Brook is the owner of this land which was donated to the organization in 1916 by Jephtha Wade, Jr. to provide a country home for the orphanage, as it was in those days. It was given with no restrictions in terms of its future use, as was the tradition of the Wade Family, trusting the organization to do what was needed through changing times. In fact, when Beech Brook moved to this location, it was necessary to sell the building on St. Clair Avenue, which had been donated by the first Jephtha Wade, with the family's full support.

### False Claim

Beech Brook should donate the land to the city for a park or sell it to someone who wishes to create a park here.

### Fact

Whether or not the rezoning happens, this land will not remain vacant, nor will it become a park. During the 17 months the property was on the market, no one inquired

about buying it to create a park or nature preserve.

Beech Brook engaged in an in-depth process to market the property and consider every proposal, resulting in a contract with Wiley Creek LLC (Axiom Group). At no time, despite rumors to the contrary, has any donor or land conservancy approached us to express interest or present any such proposal.

Since closing our residential program, we no longer need, **nor can we afford to maintain**, this large property. But we **are** obligated to do what is best for our community's most vulnerable children and families; thus, the decision to sell the land and use the proceeds to support our mission. If the rezoning fails to pass, Beech Brook will need to pursue a use that will generate revenue on this land so that we can continue to deliver on that mission.

If the rezoning passes, the proceeds from the sale will be added to our endowment to provide funding for more direct services. Since most of our staff work with children and families in their homes, in the community and in schools, this would allow us to move to a smaller, much less expensive space with easy access for our staff and clients.

As a Beech Brook donor, you know that we are **always** working to secure government, foundation and charitable funding for the programs we provide to our clients, many of whom live in extreme poverty. To suggest that we should donate this land and not put this asset to work for children and families would be financially irresponsible.



**False Claim**

Beech Brook will not allow people on its campus.

**Fact**

Beech Brook has always welcomed visitors to our campus; however, this is a private property, and we ask that people call us to schedule a meeting or a tour. While we no longer provide residential treatment, we continue to have families and children coming to the campus for appointments, and we are responsible for safeguarding their privacy.

Most businesses, nonprofit or not, do not allow strangers to wander through their offices, taking photos or driving around their property without notice and for no reason related to our operations. We ask everyone who visits, even our board members and most trusted associates, to sign in with the receptionist upon arrival. All visitors are expected to do the same.

In January, we welcomed many Pepper Pike residents to an open house planned by the prospective developers, the Axiom Group, and we appreciated the opportunity to tell them more about our work and the reason why we are selling our land. We have given tours to others who have visited, including some of the most vocal opponents to the rezoning.

**False claim**

Beech Brook is promoting the developer’s plans.

**Fact**

Because we are the owners of the property, we were required to ask for the zoning change. But we are not involved in the development plans; that’s between the developers and the city.

Our responsibility is to do what is best for Beech Brook. We have

survived for 168 years by continually evolving to meet the needs of children and families through different times. Sometimes that means we must make difficult decisions, such as leaving our campus home of nearly 100 years. But we must continue to look to the future so that we can carry on this sacred trust, as all our predecessors have done since 1852.

In November, if you are a Pepper Pike resident, you will be asked to vote on the rezoning. We can’t tell you how to vote, but we hope that you will have a better understanding of why we are making this mission-driven decision to move....to better serve more of Northeast Ohio’s most vulnerable children and families.

I invite you to call me at 216.831.2255 or email me at troyer@beechbrook.org any time if you have questions or would like more information.

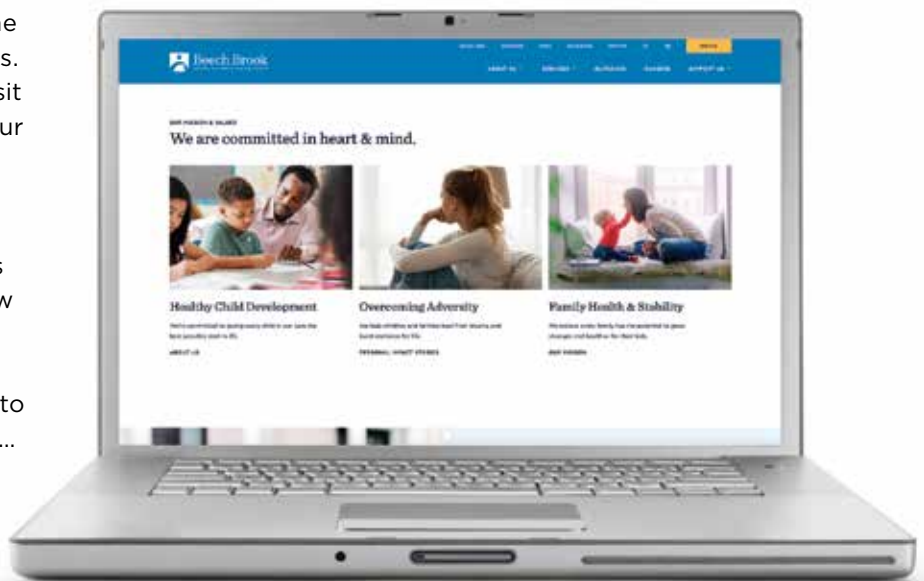
# Beech Brook launches new logo and website!



In January, we wrote to you about the launch of our new Beech Brook logo and website, and the total rebranding that a project like that requires. Since then, we hope you’ve had a chance to visit us at [www.beechbrook.org](http://www.beechbrook.org) and to check out our new look on Facebook and Twitter.

Our new logo includes the following elements: a bridge representing our work to help families overcome adversity; a sunrise to symbolize new beginnings, and an overall shape representing our work with people and our commitment to children and families. We chose the blue color to represent warmth, quality and trustworthiness... qualities which we believe define our work.

Let us know what you think!



## MOMENTS THAT MATTER *continued from cover*

After a very trying boys' group (chairs had been thrown, kids were climbing on top of tables - just general chaos), I met with her and I was unprepared with interventions. I was not present, and I felt frustrated as she, once again, did not know what she wanted to talk about or work on. My irritability with the group influenced my frustration with the lack of progress in our sessions, and I shared how our sessions needed to have more of her voice and less of mine. I felt guilty about that conversation; I felt that I should have grounded myself after the boys' group and not allowed that interaction to color my session with this client. However, after that

session, I noticed that she began to lead the sessions more by asking for certain interventions. (She liked it when we practiced mindful painting to music, for example, which would help her relax so she could share and process her week.)

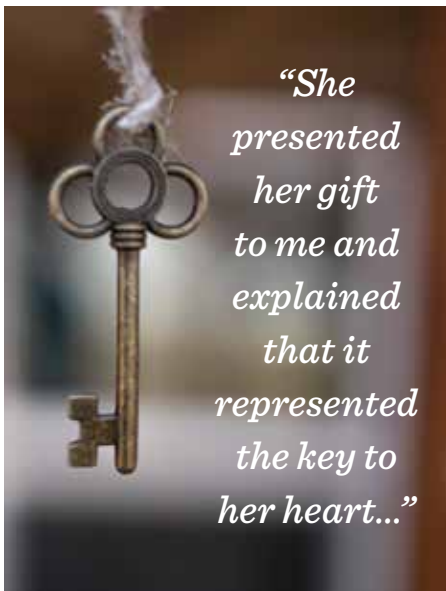
Fast forward to my leaving the department and transferring my client to another therapist. In our last session, she surprised me with the most meaningful interaction that I have ever had with a client. She waited to the end of our session and said that she had wanted to give me something. She had looked up giving gifts to counselors and learned that we couldn't accept presents of value. She found an old key at home and bought a chain at some shop for a few cents. She presented her gift to me and explained that it represented the key to her heart. She explained that she had not let anyone into her thoughts and feelings as much as she had let me. I was sobbing. This moment taught me so much. I thought that the session we had after my frustrating group experience was not helpful for her. However, her thoughtful and touching gift showed me that how much we touch a person's heart is hard to evaluate at times, but it should never be doubted.



*Felicia Coffman*

Our work is so important, and the connections we develop are so valuable. Remembering that experience is what I draw upon whenever I have a client who seems to be struggling with motivation. They may not know what they want to change or whether they can change, but I know the work I do - supporting them, driving them, etc. - is helpful.

Her key swings from my rearview mirror, and I think of her almost daily as I send a positive thought in her direction out into the universe. I am eternally thankful for my experience with her, as it helped me learn a formative and valuable lesson for myself and for all my current and future clients.



## Here's another easy way to help Beech Brook!

Doing a lot of shopping online these days? Just log on to [amazon.smile.com](https://amazon.smile.com) and you'll find all the same great Amazon merchandise at the same price. Just choose Beech Brook as your charity, and the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price on eligible items to Beech Brook!



Learn more about the program at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com).

# Beech Brook Staff weigh in on working remotely and the “new normal”

Over the past few weeks, as we’ve begun to operate in a whole new way, many of our staff members have shared their feelings about Beech Brook and its response to the COVID-19 epidemic. Here are just a few of their comments.

## **Lauren Klaas,** ***Foster Parent Recruiter***

Beech Brook has been nothing but compassionate and professional during this entire pandemic...not only the extended allowance to let their employees work from home and not add yet another stressor of “where is my next paycheck coming from?” to the mix, but also frequently checking in with the employees to make sure that we are updated with the most recent and important information that is surfacing regarding the circumstances of our situation.

There is a saying that has been floating around since this pandemic began that says, “Pay attention to how companies treat their employees during this time...it speaks VOLUMES to their core ethics.” After reading that, I became very proud to be affiliated with Beech Brook, for Beech Brook has done nothing but take care of their employees like family! And I truly believe that family is a core ethic of Beech Brook, something that we stand for. So many of my coworkers have checked in with me via a quick text message here and there and have been nonstop supportive. I suppose I never really realized how much of a jackpot my position with Beech Brook was until things got serious! All I can say is, I am beyond grateful to be a

part of the Beech Brook family, and I’m not the only one noticing how incredible Beech Brook has been to us all during these trying times!

## **Jennifer Morse,** ***Family Life Specialist,*** ***REACH***

Honestly, I can’t imagine any workplace being more supportive than Beech Brook has been. We are all in the middle of a very uncertain and scary time. I feel that Beech Brook has done everything possible to ease our burden. When this began, we were all anxious about staying employed; having a stable income without having to use all our benefit time; staying safe and healthy and not putting ourselves and our own families at risk; being home with our children since they, too, are not in school; being able to continue serving our clients in an effective but safe way; and somehow staying sane through it all. Beech Brook took all of those worries away by quickly providing a way for all employees to work from home and to continue to get paid. We are able to be home, employed and safe, and to work with our clients in the most flexible way possible. On top of all that, my amazing supervisor, co-workers, IT, and administration have all been supportive in every way. There is a sense that “we are all

in this together” and that makes me feel extremely supported. Anyone who knows me knows that I love Beech Brook and the opportunity I have to do this work. The way we have been supported through this crisis is something I will never forget and only increases my loyalty and dedication to this amazing agency.

## **Betty Ann Carmosino,** ***Lead Receivables*** ***Specialist, Finance***

I have often said I work in the best department at Beech Brook...not in the capacity of the true mission of Beech Brook, because I don’t deal directly with clients, but in Finance, we work closely with each other and rely on each to “get the job done.” We are a Finance Team, and, in our own way, it all adds up to Beech Brook’s mission.

In Finance, all our personalities mesh with ease. Although we haven’t been able to see each other on a daily basis, we do “chit chat” on our Microsoft Teams Application. We say good morning every day, find out how each other’s evenings were, what we watched on TV or Netflix, etc., all as if we were in the office. We all met for lunch the other day through “Lunch in Microsoft Teams.” It was lots of laughs, wonderful to see each other in our new normal, and we picked up right where we left off on March 16th.

This is all the support I need. We all know our jobs and we all do our jobs. We know if we need help, we can reach out to each other and get the help we need. And hopefully soon, this new normal will be old.



3737 Lander Rd.  
Cleveland, OH 44124  
216.831.2255  
www.beechbrook.org

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Cleveland, OH  
Permit No. 1552

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Join Us On:



## Beech Brook's Mission

Helping children and families thrive by promoting healthy child development, strengthening the ability to overcome adversity and enhancing family health and stability.

Beech Brook is a contract agency of the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County.

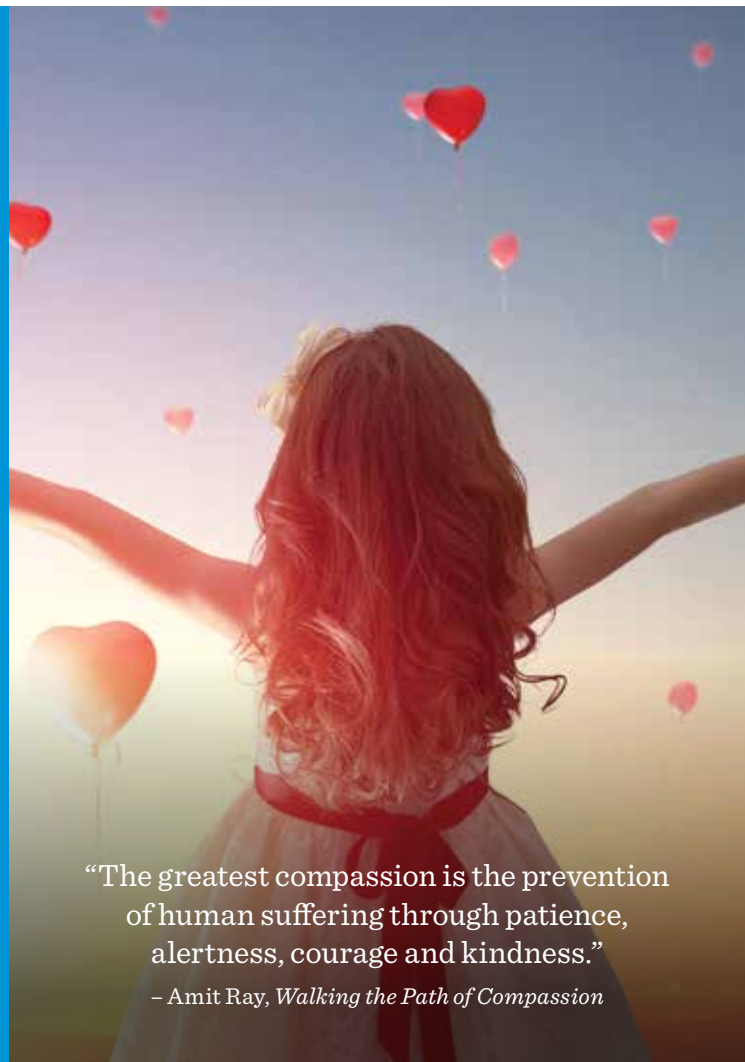
# Will you support our Hearts of Hope Fund?

During the COVID-19 crisis, Beech Brook's direct service staff is continuing to reach out and work with clients through whatever means they safely can. And Beech Brook has continued to pay both our full-time and part-time staff because we care about them and their families and understand that the services they provide are critical to the safety and stability of the most vulnerable children and families in our community.

That's why, at this time, we've created a **Hearts of Hope Fund**, and we're asking for your help. Proceeds will support the basic needs of our clients through cash payments and gift cards for food, medications, clothing and other immediate needs. The Fund will also help our direct service staff continue to do their essential work in the community.

It is this measure of hope that we all hold in our hearts that will get us through this crisis. Will you help us provide that hope to those who most need it now by contributing to our **Hearts of Hope Fund**?

Please consider making a gift online at [www.beechbrook.org](http://www.beechbrook.org)



“The greatest compassion is the prevention of human suffering through patience, alertness, courage and kindness.”

– Amit Ray, *Walking the Path of Compassion*